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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2597

REFS SAIGON 2512

1. AFTER CLOSED SESSION EVENING AUGUST 7, SEVEN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THREE OTHERS ISSUED JOINT COMMUNIQUE CRITICIZING GVN FOR POOR CAMPAIGN PREPARATIONS AND FUMBLING OF QUANGE TRI VISIT. COMMUNIQUE ENDS WITH THREE-POINT RESOLUTION STATING: (1) THAT GVN MUST BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR "DONG HA INCIDENT"; (2) CANDIDATES PROTEST GVN'S FAILURE TO CARRY OUT RESPONSIBILITY IN ORGANIZING MEETING BETWEEN

APGE 2 47?84 2597 C O N G I D E N T I AL
PRESIDENTIAL SLATES AND CANDIDATES AT QUANG TRI; AND (3) CANDIDATES WILL TAKE AN "APPROPRIATE ATTITUDE" IF GVN CONTINUES IN ITS FAILURE TO CARRY OUT RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER ELECTION LAW.

2. CANDIDATES OR REPRESENTATIVES FROM NINE LISTS MET AGIAN IN CLOSED SESSION MORNING AUGUST 8 TO DISCUSS FURTHER COURSE OF ACTION. SLATES OF THIEU/KY AND CO/SINH NOT REPRESENTED.

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AFTER MORE THAN THREE HOURS GROUP DECIDED TO SEND STRONGLY WORDED LETTER TO GENERALS THIEU AND KY PROTESTING DONG HA AFFAIR AND REQUESTING ASSURANCES FROM THIEU AND KY THAT HENCEFORTH CAMPAIGN ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE MADE PROPERLY. CANDIDATES WILL MEET AGAIN MORNING AUGUST 10, HOPING TO EXAMINE ANY THIEU/KY REPLY AND , IF ASSURANCES JUDGED SATISFACTORY, PLAN RESUMPITON OF CAMPAIGN TRAVELS AUGUST11.

3. ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF SOURCES ATTITUDE OF MOST CANDIDATES AT MEETING WAS FAIRLY CONCILIATORY TOWARDS GVN AND SENTIMENT GENERALLY FAVORED RESUMPTION OF NORMAL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SOME, HOWEVER, UNSUCCESSFULLY PUSHED HARDER LINE THAT CANDIDATES JOINTLY DEMAND RESIGNATIONS OF THIEU AND KY FROM

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THEIR GOVERNMENT POSITIONS. WE GATHER THAT AMONG HARDLINERS WERE HUONG, DZU, VU KHONG KHANH AND REPRESENTATIVES OF NGUYEN HOA HIEP, ALL OF WHOM STAYED TO MEET FOREIGN AND LOCAL PRESS AFTER MEETING BORUE UP.

4. IN PRIVATE REMARKS TO EMBOFF AFTER MEETING VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DR. PHAN QUANG DAN SAID THAT HE THOUGHT WORST PART OF DONG HA AFFAIR OVER AND THAT CAMPAIGN LIKELY RESUME AUGUST11. DAN DID HOWEVER SAY HE THOUGHT LETTER TO THIEU AND KY RATHER STRONGLY WORDED. HE ADDED THAT AT MEETING CANDIDATES HAD ALSO DEDIDED TO REVISE CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE TO PROVIDE FOR VISITS BY CANDIDATES TO 12 INSTEAD OF 22 LOCATIONS AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED# DAN COMMENTED THAT OLDER AND LESS ENERGETIC CANDIDATES ACTUALLY WELCOMED REDUCED SCHEDULE.

5. MEANWHILE SPECIAL COMMISSARIAT FOR ADMINISTRATION IN LETTER DATED AUGUST 7 AND ADDRESSED TO CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE, GIVES GVN VERSION OS DONG HA AFFAIR. IT EXPLAINS THAT GVN ACTED IN GOOD FAITH AND MADE ELABORATE PREPARATIONS TO ARRANGE FOR MEETING BETWEEN VOTERS AND CANDIDATES.

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LETTER CONCLUDES BY REQUESTING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TO NOTIFY SPECIAL COMMISSARIAT OF NEW CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

6. AS THINGS STAND NOW NEXT MOVE APPEARS TO BE UP TO THIEU AND KY WHO MAY OR MAY NOT CHOOSE TO REPLY TO LETTER FROM CANDIDATES. KY HAS ALREADY BEEN QUOTED BY VIETNAM PRESS AS SAYING ON AUGUST 7 THAT HE DID NOT CONSIDER QUANG TRI INCIDENT SERIOUS AND HE IS PREPARED TO TRAVEL WITHOTHER CANDIDATES DURING CAMPAIGN. THIEU/KY SCHEDULED MEET WITH LOCAL PRESS AT 1600 LOCAL AUGUST 8 AND AGAIN AT 1900 WITH SELECTED FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS. BUNKER

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